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Date 7 OCTOBER 1987*Commentary***JACK ANDERSON and DALE VAN ATTA**

Delving Into a Lover's Death in Baalbek

Barbara Newman's journey to the "suburbs of hell," as she describes the terrorist stronghold of Baalbek, was an exercise in journalistic enterprise and daring. Carrying Jack Anderson credentials that would only have antagonized the terrorists she went to observe, she ventured into the most forbidden corner of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's dark realm.

Yet possibly even more intriguing than the journey itself is the story of how Newman arranged the trip and why she went.

She went, first of all, to score a journalistic coup. She became the first Western correspondent to visit Baalbek since the ayatollah turned it into a terrorist training center in 1979—except for the Associated Press' Terry Anderson, one of the hostages, who, unhappily, is still thought to be there. But for Barbara Newman, the trip was also a personal quest. She wanted to find out who killed her lover, the Lebanese warlord Bashir Gemayel.

The story began in 1981 when Newman, then a reporter-producer for the ABC television show "20/20," flew to Lebanon to film a documentary called "The Unholy Wars." Gemayel was a key figure in her story—a warlord with a ruthless reputation, Arab, Christian, married. She was a reporter with a knack for getting the big story, American, Jewish, divorced. Yet they were much alike—two tempestuous, headstrong people who became embroiled in a torrid romance.

We learned about the relationship in August 1982, when Newman, now a member of our news team, accompanied us to Beirut during the Israeli invasion. She arranged for us to join Gemayel for

dinner in his embattled, sand-bagged offices. Beirut was a cauldron of bursting bombs, thudding artillery shells and sniper-fire that night, with flares lighting up the skies. Yet we caught Newman slipping off in the night to meet Gemayel.

On Aug. 23, 1982, Bashir Gemayel was elected president of Lebanon. Nine days before his inauguration, he kept an appointment with political aides. A terrible explosion brought down the three-story building. When Newman learned that Gemayel had been killed, she collapsed.

Five years later she sought the answer to the question that still haunted her: Who killed Gemayel? She contacted Gemayel's trusted lieutenant, 31-year-old Elie Hobeika, who now heads his own guerrilla faction. She asked him to take her to Baalbek.

He met her at the Damascus airport and hustled her into a bulletproof Mercedes. There were two bullet nicks on the thick glass window on the driver's side. She clambered over two automatic weapons and settled into the front seat beside him. At Syrian checkpoints, Hobeika snapped on the inside light to show his face, then lurched ahead without waiting for clearance. They listened peacefully to classical music as they sped through the night to Bekaa Valley, the valley of death, where the terrorists hold sway.

Footnote: Newman finally learned that Gemayel had been killed by a sophisticated bomb, detonated by a 26-year-old opponent named Chartouni. He had planted 250 pounds of TNT under the direction of a Syrian intelligence officer. We will report more of Newman's exploits in future columns.

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